

December 19, 2010

SOLI DEO GLORIA
4th Sunday in Advent

Good Shepherd, Novi

JOHN 1:18-29
BEHOLD! THE LAMB OF GOD!

In the name + of Jesus.

John the Baptist did not come to tell people about all of the trappings of Christmas. As nice as they are, they do not save. John the Baptist preached to people who were in trouble. They were sinners. They were dying. And they desperately needed to be delivered from God's wrath, the grave, and hell.

For centuries, Old Testament prophets had been pointing to the coming Messiah. The whole Old Testament is one giant arrow pointing to Jesus. John the Baptist is the tip on the arrow. He does not proclaim the Messiah is *coming*. He proclaims, "The Messiah is *here!* Behold! The Lamb of God!"

John's description of Jesus is most fitting and most vivid. The Lamb of God is more than a title; it is a job description. God had demanded sacrifices from his people. They had sinned against him. God would only be appeased through a blood sacrifice. He had prescribed the Israelites to slaughter a lamb every morning and every evening. Its blood would drip down the altar. By these sacrifices which God had commanded, God declared atonement to the people.

The lamb was also chosen for the Passover. A male lamb without defect was to be slaughtered. Its blood was to be smeared upon the door posts of every Israelite home. God had promised when the angel saw the blood of the lamb on the door, God's curse would pass over that house. Death would not come upon any who were in it. The blood of the lamb delivered from the divine curse and from death.

I suppose Christmas does not usually have people thinking of death and sacrifice and blood, but that is what Jesus came for. "Behold! The Lamb of God!" declares John; and you need him. While you may find excuses for your sins, God will not accept them. You are under God's scrutiny. He sees. He knows. He judges rightly. You sin against God at the cost of your life, and you can't fix it. Therefore, death reigns over you.

"Behold! The Lamb of God!" declares John. Jesus is the Lamb who would be slain for you. His innocent blood is the payment for your sins. The Lamb of God would be put on a spit and consumed in the flames of God's wrath for you. So the Son of God gives up his life as the cost for your sins. Jesus is the blood sacrifice which appeases God. And since he is the Son of God, he takes away the sin of the world.

Behold! The Lamb of God! He was slaughtered for you to deliver you from the divine curse, from sin, and from death. His blood was sprinkled upon you when you were baptized. So, the Lord sees the blood, and death passes over you. The blood shed for you is given to you in Holy Communion. Through it, the Lord proclaims his atonement to you.

Behold! The Lamb of God has come for you – the perfect Lamb whose sacrifice takes away the sin of the world. And that is why you continue to come to God's house – to receive all of the blessings that come from the Lamb. Behold! The Lamb of God! He has given himself for you so that he can give his blessings to you. He forgives your sin. He delivers you from death. He will bring you into Paradise. For, God has been appeased by Jesus' sacrifice, and therefore, God is pleased with you.

In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.